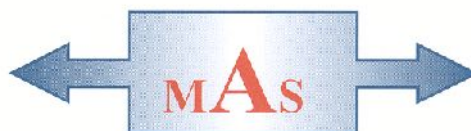


FIRE ALARM UPGRADE PITMEDDEN HOUSE ABERDEENSHIRE



**- Archaeological Watching Brief -
Carried out 13th January 2017
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd**



**Report No: MAS 2017-1
by
J C Murray**

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PITMEDDEN HOUSE ABERDEENSHIRE FIRE ALARM UPGRADE

-Archaeological Watching Brief-

J C Murray

1. Background

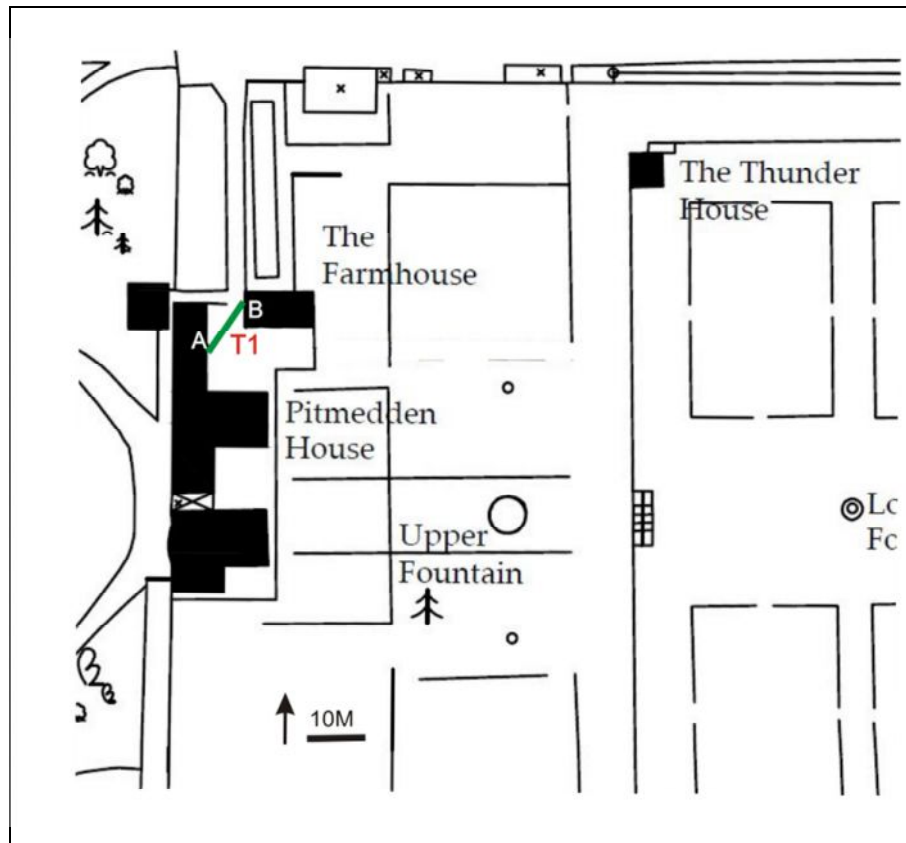
- 1.1 An upgrade of the fire alarm system was required at Pitmedden House, Aberdeenshire. As a result an archaeological watching brief was carried out to record any archaeological features that might be revealed.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in the context of the possibility that the line of an external cable trench might have cut across foundations relating to the 17th-century wings of the house that existed prior to the burning of the house in 1807 (MacGowan and Addyman, 2007) and that the lifting of floor boards internally, similarly, might reveal architectural detail.
It was also considered that knowledge of the soil and rubble in this area might help in assessing any geophysical survey work undertaken in the future.
- 1.3 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland to undertake the work; the field element of which was carried out on 13th January 2017.

2. The Site

- 2.1 The cable trench ran SW - NE across the courtyard the between the smiddy/garage and the farmhouse (Illus 1, 2), while floor boards were lifted in certain rooms at first floor level within the House (Illus.3).

Parish: Udney Parish NGR: NJ 8844 2805

NMRS No: NJ82NE 33



Illus 1: Location of cable trench T1 (trench line green)

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The cable trench was dug by a mini- digger with a toothed bucket.
The excavation of the trench was observed, planned and photographed by MAS Ltd.
- 3.2 The floor boards had been lifted prior to the commencement of the watching brief and were replaced shortly after.

4. The Results

External Cable Trench

The cable trench ran SW-NE between the N end of the door into the smiddy/garage (A, GPS: 388444 828066) and the E gable of the farmhouse (B, GPS: 388443 828071). The trench was 11m long, 700mm wide and c.400mm deep. The fill of the trench was uniformly made up of rubble stone, gravel and sandy soil with some discarded pieces of ceramic drain below a thin surface of sandy gravel. At c.2.5m NE of the smiddy/garage door, a cast iron water pipe

ran E-N across the trench. At c.6m NE of the smiddy door, a beige sandy natural was evident at a depth of 400mm.



Illus 2: Cable trench, looking NE

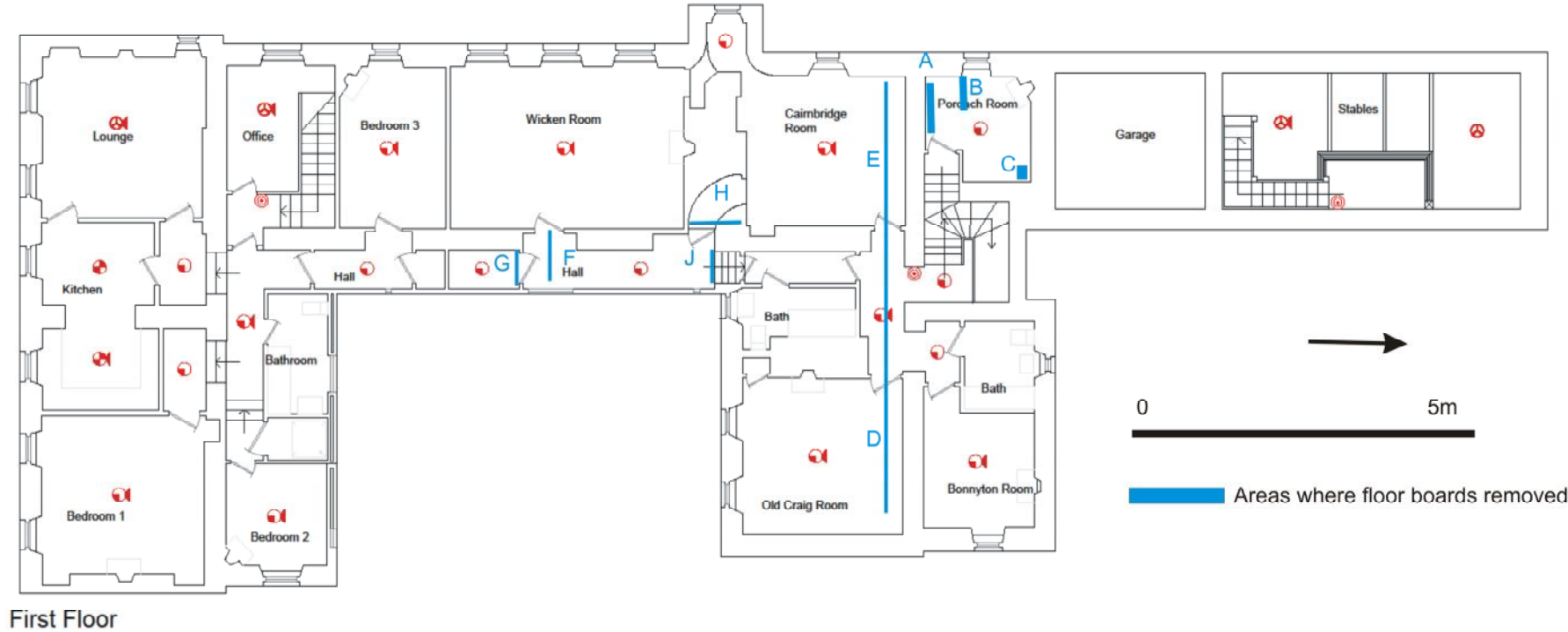
No archaeological features were evident in the rubble fill of the cable trench.

Internal Floor Boards

Floor boards were raised in some of the rooms and corridors of the first floor of the House to facilitate access for fire alarm cabling.

In general, the floorboard width was 135mm. The floor joists measured c.150mm x 65mm were spaced at intervals of c.400-450mm.

Boards were lifted in the following areas (see Illus.3):



3Illus 4: 1st Floor Plan showing where floorboards were lifted (blue)

Pordach Room: Boards were lifted along the S wall (A), E of the window in the W wall (B) and in the NE corner (C).



Illus 5: Pordach Room, view to S wall

Old Craig Room:

Floorboards were lifted along the N wall of the room (D).



Illus 6: Floorboards along N wall of Old Craig Room

Cairnbridge (Cairnbrogie) Room:

Floorboards were lifted along the N wall (E) of the room and the N wall itself was visible below.



Illus 7: N wall of room visible, looking N

Entrance to Wicken Room:

Only one floorboard was lifted which crossed the hallway at the entrance to the Wicken Room (F) but did not enter it. Boards were also lifted in the cupboard at the S end of the corridor (G).



Illus 8: Entrance to Wicken Room on right, looking S

N End of Hall leading to Wicken Room:

Floorboards were lifted across the N end of the corridor leading to the Wicken Room (J) and in a cupboard on the E side of the corridor (H). Beneath the boards in the cupboard (H), three steps of what was a wooden spiral stair leading down to the ground floor were just visible. Although difficult to observe properly in the narrow confines of the cupboard, it was evident that the remainder of the stairs had been disassembled. It is probable that the stair would have emerged on the ground floor on the S side of the entrance hall.



Illus 9: View of spiral stair in cupboard, looking W



Illus 10: Detail of stair

5. Discussion

- 5.1 With the exception of the wooden stair (Illus 10) observed in the cupboard at the N end of the corridor leading to the Wicken Room which led down to the

ground floor, but now dismantled, no other architectural features or evidence of earlier activity was evident.

6. References

MacGowan, P. and Addyman, T. 2007. Pitmedden Historic Landscape survey. National Trust for Scotland, unpublished report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic record (on CD)

Photographic catalogue Pitmedden House Fire Alarm Cable 2017	
Digital frame no	Content
Pitmedden House 2017	
1-3	Cable trench, looking SW
4	Detail of cable trench, looking SW
5-6	Cable trench, looking NE
7-8	Cable trench, looking W
9	Cable trench fill, looking NE
10	View of corridor leading to Wicken Room
11	View from E end of Old Craig Room towards Cairnbridge (Cairnbrogie) Room
12	Door sign of Old Craig Room
13	Floorboards along N wall of Old Craig Room (D)
14	Door Sign of Cairnbrogie (Cairnbridge) Room
15-16	N wall of Cairnbrogie Room seen below floorboards (E)
17	Door sign of Wicken Room
18	Floorboards across corridor leading to Wicken Room (H)
19	Floorboards in cupboard at S end of corridor to Wicken Room (G)
20	Floorboards at N of corridor to Wicken Room leading into cupboard (J)
21-22	Wooden steps visible below cupboard floor at N end of Wicken Room corridor (H)
23	View, looking W at stairs into Pordach Room
24-25	Pordach Room door sign
26	Floorboards along S wall of Pordach Room, running E-W (A) and below window in W wall (B)
27	NE corner of Pordach Room (C)

28	View, looking S, of S wall of Pordach Room (A)
29-30	Entrance to Wicken Room (F)